

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 MMO-01 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 OMB-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 PER-01 EB-07 SIL-01 H-02

SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 EUR-12 NEAE-00 DODE-00 OPR-02

FS-01 ABF-01 /076 W

----- 117532

O 171500Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3733

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

DIST ENGR COE RIYADH IMMEDIATE

DIVENGR MEDIV COE CAMP DARBY ITALY IMMEDIATE

CINCEUR IMMEDIATE

CHUSMTM DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 1181

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, SA, US

SUBJECT: REALIGNMENT OF US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, MEDITERRANIAN
DIVISION

REF (A) STATE 36487, (B) STATE 32445, (C) STATE 25981,
(D) ROME 2187, (E) JIDDA 852 (NOTAL), (F) JIDDA 681

SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY HAS REVIEWED THE PLANNED MOVE TO SAUDI
ARABIA OF ELEMENTS OF THE US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND WE
WELCOME THE MOVE PROVIDED IT IS ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT UPSETTING
MAJOR LONG-TERM USG INTERESTS AND WITHOUT DAMAGING THE CLOSE
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SAUDI ARABIA.
THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS HAS BEEN A CONSISTENTLY POSITIVE FORCE
IN THIS RELATIONSHIP. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND AGAINST GIVING
THE MOVE MAJOR PUBLICITY OR HANDLING IT IN A WAY THAT WOULD
GIVE THE IMPRESSION-EITHER TO THE SAUDIS OR TO CRITICS
OF THE USG-SAG RELATIONSHIP--THAT A MAJOR MILITARY (WITH
EMPHASIS ON MILITARY) COMMAND IS BEING ESTABLISHED IN SAUDI
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ARABIA. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THE EMBASSY AND CONSULTATIONS WITH COE PERSONNEL HERE, WE WELCOME THE PLANNED MOVE OF A COE MIDDLE EAST ACTIVITY TO SAUDI ARABIA. WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED--AS THE COE WOULD HAVE--JIDDA AS THE LOCATION OF ITS CENTER, BUT THE SAG HAS STATED THEY WANT THE CAPITAL, RIAYDH, TO BE THE SITE. BECAUSE WE WANT THE MOVE TO BE SMOOTH AND ATTENDANT PUBLICITY TO BE AS LOW-KEY AS POSSIBLE WE HAVE SEVERAL CONCERNS. THEY ARE:

2. AS STATED IN REF E, WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND AGAINST THE STATIONING IN SAUDI ARABIA OF ADDITIONAL GENERAL OFFICERS OF HIGHER GRADE THAN THOSE CURRENTLY SERVING HERE, WHICH, INTER ALIA, COULD GIVE THE APPEARANCE THAT THERE IS A MAJOR US MILITARY COMMAND HERE. WE SEE NO RPT NO ADVANTAGE TO USG INTERESTS HERE IF SUCH A MOVE INVOLVES A LARGE-SCALE INFLUX OF US MILITARY PERSONNEL WITH ASSOCIATED HEADQUARTERS SUPPORT. WE PARTICULARLY DO NOT PRT NOT WANT TO PRIVDE CRITICS--BOTH IN THE REGION AND OUTSIDE--A FOCAL POINT THAT COULD DAMAGE USG-SAG RELATIONS.

3. AS STATED IN REF F, WE FEEL THAT THE PUBLICITY GIVEN TO THE TRANSFER BE AS LOW-KEY AS POSSIBLE. THEREFORE WE URGE STRONGLY THAT THE EMPHASIS IN ANNOUNCEMENTS SHOULD BE ON ON THE DEACTIVATION OF MEDITERRANEAN DIVISION RATHER ON THE CREATION OF AN AREA ACTIVITY IN SAUDI ARABIA. WE DO NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE SAG WOULD WELCOME WIDE PUBLICITY ABOUT AN INCREASE IN US MILITARY PRESENCE IN SAUDI ARABIA.

4. ADDRESSING THE SAME POINT, THE PROPOSED NAME CITED IN REF B "US ARMY ENGINEER CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY-MIDDLE EAST" OUGHT TO BE CHANGED TO "US ENGINEER CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY-MIDDLE EAST" DROPPING THE WORD "ARMY."

5. ALSO WE FEEL THAT THE NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL CORPS PERSONNEL OUGHT TO BE ANSWERED MORE CANDIDLY THAN PROPOSED IN REF B. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE WILL BE AS MANY AS 250 ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL. WE HAVE NO RPT NOT OBJECTION TO THAT MANY, BUT WE FEEL THAT A MORE REALISTIC NUMBER OUGHT TO BE STATED.

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6. ALSO IN REF B, WE FEEL THAT THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION "WHAT THE MAGNITUDE OF THE SAUDI ARABIAN PROGRAM IN DOLLAR?"-- IS MUCH LESS THAN CANDID. THE FIGURE OF \$16 BILLION FOR PROJECTS IN THE PLANNING AND DESIGN STAGE IS PUBLICALLY GIVEN BY THE CORPS TO VISITORS TO SAUDI ARABIA, AND SAYING THAT "CON- GRESSONAL AND/OR DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED FOR \$6.1 BILLION" IS MISLEADING AND COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS

WITH CREDIBILITY.

7 PER CONCERN ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS
STATED IN REF C PARA 2, WE AGREE THIS IS A REAL ISSUE AND
WE FEEL THAT THE PROPOSED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS MEET THE
ISSUE HEAD ON.

8. SPECIFICALLY CONCERNING QUESTIONS FOR EMBASSY JIDDA
REF C PARA 4: WE HAVE CONFIRMED THAT MINDEF PRINCE SULTAN
HAS BEEN BRIEFED AND APPROVES OF TRANSFER. MINISTRY OF
DEFENSE AND AVIATION (MODA) IS AWARE AND APPROVES OF FACT
THAT THE EXPANDED CORPS PRESENCE WILL HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES
OUTSIDE SAUDI ARABIA BUT WILL NOT RPT NOT PAY FOR ANY OF
THE COSTS-INCLUDING RELOCATION COSTS--ASSOCIATED WITH THOSE
OUTSIDE PROJECTS. A SEPARATE FORMULA FOR COMPUTING THESE
COSTS WILL BE WORKED OUT.
PORTER

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